

Australian Garden HISTORY

vol. 32, no. 1, July 2020

Going virtual during COVID-19
After the bushfires



Royal Botanic Gardens
Melbourne

30 JUL 2020

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Editorial

Francesca Beddie and Penelope Curtin

We arranged to have the handover of editorial responsibilities from Bernadette Hince on 1 April 2020, not the day of fools but the beginning of a new editorial cycle. What was to have been a visit to Bernadette's home in Canberra, followed by her tomato-and-olive tart and a catch-up with Mariana Rollgejser, the journal's long-standing designer, turned into a Zoom meeting: helpful, convivial, but not the same as the real thing.

In her first editorial of *Australian Garden History* (vol. 27, no. 1, July 2015), Bernadette posed these questions: *What constitutes a historic garden? Exactly what is a cultural landscape?* We asked her whether she now had answers. She replied:

I didn't expect a simple answer to the latter. During my five years as editor, *Australian Garden History* has been fortunate to run some excellent articles addressing this – most recently Anne Claoue-Long's 'What is a cultural landscape?' in January 2020. Even though Anne provides useful criteria for answering this question ... I am still searching for a robust definition. Natural landscapes altered by humans over time? Few landscapes on earth remain unaffected by human action, and most hold significance for one or another group. Perhaps it's the stories landscapes tell that I find most powerful – they are certainly one reason the past five years have been so absorbing for me.

In continuing to explore the relationships between people and nature, we bring a love of gardens and social history, and will strive through the stories we publish to enhance understanding of how human beings can best coexist with the environment.

In this issue, contributors show us different aspects of gardening, from Norfolk Island to Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills, revealing different sources for these histories – old maps, newspaper cuttings, lists of flowers for posies – as well as approaches to preserving history with tours and exhibitions. The cover takes a picture from an exhibition organised by the Australian Museum of Gardening at Adelaide's Carrick Hill. Some AGHS branches had planned to bring the exhibition to their regions as part of the society's 40th anniversary. COVID-19 intervened, although it is hoped the exhibition will reach Canberra before the end of the year and go on to Armidale in 2021. In the meantime, readers can read the story of lawn – and its maintenance – in Australia, and get a preview of the exhibition.

Another duo of editors, Christina Dyson and Richard Aitkin, wrote in 2011, 'Welcome to the real world. Or, is that the virtual world? Or perhaps the viral world', little knowing how eerie those words sound in 2020. The social isolation caused by COVID-19 has been a prompt to accelerating our goal to build synergies between the journal and the society's digital publications. We started by bringing you, via the April e-newsletter, an article by Liz Ware on her *Silent Spaces* initiative. Our second offering is a treat on the website: magnificent images from The David Roche Foundation's exhibition in Adelaide, *Flowers: Passion. Pain, Nation*, which was postponed because of the lockdown.

The willingness of members of the society to share their expertise and stories is invaluable to preserving the special place the journal occupies in the life of the Australian Garden History Society.



Cover Lawn-related 19th- and 20th-century tools and equipment from the collection of the Australian Museum of Gardening at Carrick Hill, photomontage by Sara Huffen (image courtesy Carrick Hill)

Australian Garden HISTORY

quarterly journal of the Australian Garden History Society

40 YEARS



AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

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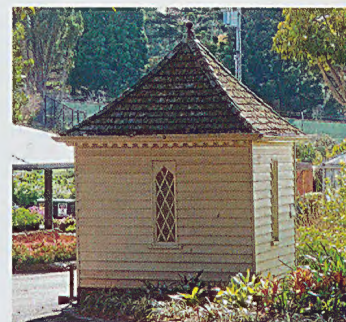
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Liz Bennetto, a voluntary guide at Geelong Botanic Gardens, takes us on a stroll through Australia's fourth oldest botanic garden, established in 1851, photo Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens



Sandra Kearney

'The garden was gay with roses, lupins and delphiniums'

The Heysens at The Cedars in Hahndorf

The Cedars, 1935,
Heysen Family
Archives

Located just on the edge of Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills, The Cedars has long been associated with the Heysen family. For this article, the author was granted full access to a collection of archival gardening material, and, more importantly, personal letters from Josephine Heysen and her siblings to her friend 'Jack'. These letters offer the reader the strongest imprint of Heysen family life and events as the garden developed and grew around them. Today the sense of the Heysen family still lingers strongly on the property.

The township of Hahndorf, or 'the village', as it was known by the Heysens, was settled in the nineteenth century by German Lutheran migrants.

In August 1912, Hans and Selma (Sallie) Heysen took ownership of the house and an initial fourteen-and-a-half hectares of land — 'one rood and thirty-five perches or thereabouts' — just outside the village. The young couple set about extending the verandas, enlarging the windows and adding a new two-storey wing, as well as modernising the existing floorplan. The original driveway took horse-drawn carriages up to the house, rounding a rose garden before heading back to the road. When purchased by the Heysens, the property contained little to suggest the rambling country garden that was to evolve. The Heysens' eldest daughter Josephine, who would later care for the garden, often with input from her mother, and manage the surrounding land, was just six years old when the family, including three younger children, moved in.

Capturing the seasons

The previous owner, Alfred Wheelwright, had created a garden of pines, cedars and ivy. When he sold the property, the trees were of a significant size and the ivy clothed the walls of the house, to the extent that it prevented light from entering the rooms, and smothered the wrought-iron lacework surrounding the existing verandahs. Hans and Sallie, both delighted with their new home, set to work on the house and the garden. Sallie in particular loved the local area. Following a walk along one of its country lanes, she described the golden colour of the poplars and the abundance of briar berries in the hedgerows in a letter to Hans, dated 1907. Her dream had always been 'to own a house in the Hills with roses and orchard trees, a place where the children can breathe'. For Hans, it was the beauty and serenity of the Onkaparinga Valley and the magnificent gums that grew there. In conversation with Colin Thiele, his biographer, Hans noted the contentment and peace he instinctively felt amongst the flowing lines of the hills, with their gentle undulations.

The creation of the Heysen garden was also motivated by Hans's love of nature and of life. Early on, an English associate, William H. Gill, advised him to create a plan of the grounds and garden and work to it 'strictly'. No record of such a plan was ever found; however, Hans did set about carting manure, building steps and walls, laying paths and designing flower beds within a defined framework of *Robinia*, *Ulmus*, *Cedrus deodara*

and *Malus*. As the garden took shape, an area was marked out for a tennis court, another became the picking garden, laid out in rows; there was also the all-important vegetable garden, which fed the household as it expanded. The area around Hans's artist studio, located on the ridge of a hill near the main house, was planted with *Asteraceae*, *Aquilegia* and *Centaurea cyanus*. Theirs was never a manicured or grand garden in the landscape – the family viewed it as rural, a working garden that captured the seasons year on year through Hans and Sallie's favourite flowers and the vegetables grown for the table. Both vegetables and flowers soon appeared as subjects in the paintings of Hans in those early days.

Roses, posies and snippets

As the family gradually expanded and grew, each of the children was assigned domestic jobs, undertaken independently or shared among the household and around the property. Josephine, possibly as the eldest, took on the management of the farmyard animals, the ploughing, the orchard and the garden. She and her mother became keen gardeners, and amongst their collection of gardening snippets is a handwritten list in pencil by Josephine on potential roses for the garden, which included:

'Lady Hillingdon Tea', 1910, 'Mrs Herbert Stevens', 'Snow Queen' (Frau Karl Druschki), Paul's 'Sorbet Climbers', 'Kitty Kininmonth', 'Nora Cunningham', 'Sunny South' and 'La France'.



The Cedars and garden, 2019, photo Sandra Kearney

There are also handwritten lists for posies, which were often transported to town by Josephine to sell, most probably at the East End Fruit and Vegetable Market, on East Terrace in Adelaide. The lists include such delights as:

rose bud, white primrose, forget-me-nots, heliotrope, pink daisies, grape hyacinth, blue primrose and leaves ... Fuchsia, little single daisy ... Alyssum, pink daisies, mauve cowslip, white cowslip, yellow c.slip, Agatheia, pink rose buds, Begonia leaves.

The handwritten notes compiled by Sallie included lengthy planting lists for each month of the year, often containing seventy-five or more plants. Sallie was keen to ensure that she had fresh flowers throughout the house every other day. There is also a note amongst the papers entitled 'Shrubs to get (South Central

China)', on which Sallie had written 'Cotoneaster pannosus, honeysuckle [*Symphoricarfea racemose*] and vulgaris family native to North America'.

Over time Josephine and Sallie gathered many gardening articles from local newspapers and read and kept the monthly magazine, *The Bulletin*. On the front cover of one of *The Bulletins* Sallie jotted in pencil, 'pelargoniums – good, p. 4'. On a newspaper clipping on spring- and winter-flowering bulbs for autumn, it was noted they were available at E. & W. Hackett Limited, 77 Rundle Street, Adelaide. The pair saved articles by Edna Walling on topics relating to herbaceous perennials, planting borders, plants currently in flower, and plantsmen of the day. Firm favourites amongst their reading material were the gardening articles in *The Observer* newspaper written under the pseudonym 'Greenleaf'.

Left Josephine's posy list

Right Sallie's garden list for August (year unknown), Heysen Family Archives

Posies

Grape Hyacinth
Alyssum
Pink daisies
forget me nots
white cowslips
heliotrope
Pink daisies
leaves

Grape Hyacinth
Alyssum
Pink daisies
white Violets
blue cowslips
Grape hyacinth
bluebells
white cowslip
Yellow Primrose
leaves

David's Bud
pale yellow cowslip
wallflowers
pale sp. cowslip
lachenalia
leaves

Fuchsia
little single daisy
forget me not
alysium
pink daisy
mauve cowslip
heliotrope
white cowslip
forget me not
yellow c.slip
Agatheia
pink Rose buds
Begonia leaves.

Rose bud
white primrose
forget me not
heliotrope
pink daisy
grape Hyacinth
blue Primrose
leaves

Rose hip
Hyathia
yellow primrose
Red-rose buds
violet
yellow daisies
leaves

Rose bud
Pink carnation
Pale Delphinium
Coral brumet Rose
Geranium
white carnation
mignonette

Flowers in August

- 1 American Plum
- 2 Peach
- 3 Alstroemeria
- 4 Neritine
- 5 Almond
- 6 Broom
- 7 Jonquil
- 8 Snowdrop
- 9 Daffodil
- 10 Narcissus (late)
- 11 Stork
- 12 New English Daisy
- 13 Penny
- 14 Viola
- 15 Cyclamen
- 16 Geranium
- 17 Puschia
- 18 Alyssum
- 19 Polyanthus
- 20 Month. Rose
- 21 Red Aquilegia
- 22 Lachenalia
- 23 Wallflower
- 24 Grape Hyacinth
- 25 Violet
- 26 Nasturtium
- 27 Iris
- 28 Iris Tingitana (blue)
- 29 Heliotrope
- 30 Japonica
- 31 Hyathia
- 32 Forget me not
- 33 Scabiosa
- 34 Periwinkle
- 35 Snapdragon
- 36 Red Border Rose
- 37 One o'clock

- Blue bell (late)
Paeonia
Baronia (late)
Rock Spig
Yellow Camo daisy
Penstemon
Eschscholtzia
Anem. Pil.
Anemone
Red hot Pops
Clematis
Spiraea
Anemone
Hyacinth
Paniculus (late)
Primula calacoides
Linaria
Sweet peas
Daphne
Religianthus
Nemisia
Cineraria
Camelia
Cotarmundra
Calendula
Begonia
Fals. st. Rose
Candytuft
Carnation
gailardia
mignonette
Calycanthus Procruse
(Alficea scented chard)
Vrsinia Amthoides
(Annual African daisy)
Zealand Popp.
Prunus bliviana

The generous gardener

In a series of letters beginning in 1926 and spanning fifteen years, the twenty-year-old Josephine wrote to her friend Jack, who lived at Depot Springs, thirty kilometres east of Copley, in the Central Desert of South Australia. Jack was, in fact, Regien Vivian Marshall Gourlay, aged thirty-five years old in 1926 and the daughter of Jane Regien da Moalin and Thomas P. Gourlay, the latter a pioneer pastoralist, station manager and sheep farmer. Jack was married to Ronald Leslie Whyte and she too had created a garden — in the Central Desert.

A letter from Josephine to Jack in the mid-1920s addressed the topics of art exhibitions, gallery sales and horses, before going on to enquire about Jack's garden in Copley after the recent rains. Josephine described the Christmas rush at home, in The Cedars, as being endless and wrote, 'I have had to get up at five to do my gardening. Owing to the continued dry weather there has been an extra lot of watering to do'. She commented how she did not remember 'ever seeing our Ambleside [anti-German prejudice during the First World War meant that Hahndorf was renamed for a short period] look so dry. The plums are the size of pie cherries and drying on the tree and the apple leaves are all curling up'. She noted that her 'little desert rose seems to be loving it and has had four flowers', and also that 'the moon flowers [possibly *Ipomoea alba*] have grown huge and had heaps of blooms and seems to be thriving in these sunny days'. Occasionally Josephine lamented that she was too busy making 'various kinds of jam, tomato sauce, pickling beans and preserving fruit' to put pen to paper. She did, however, find time to enter local competitions and took home second prize for her table decorations of phlox and nasturtiums, which she had grown herself.

In another letter, Josephine commented on how she 'had been able to pick a big bunch of roses every morning'. She thought it 'wonderful how they have kept on blooming especially as they have had very dry weather for the last four months with only a decent shower once that had little effect'. In the same letter, she wrote that 'all the plums had ripened at once so there was plenty of jam making and already beneath the trees there were cases of plums rotting in the heat'.

Letters to Jack sometimes included seeds or even copies of *The Bulletin* containing gardening articles, while plants were often sent north by train, with Josephine hoping they 'were not too dead on arrival'. In another letter, Josephine described how she and another friend had entered



Freya in the conservatory (year unknown), Heysen Family Archives

into a dahlia-growing competition with each other, the prize for the winner being a beautiful pen, which she now used to write her letters. She hoped Jack's 'dahlias were doing well and did not think hers had ever been better owing to the cool weather'. She tells Jack 'the little poms [pom pom dahlias] are just too perfect, and she could spend hours wondering at their beauty'.

Dust storms also get a mention, with 'the sky making all the greens intensely vivid, really electric greens, blue flowers were purple and pink roses looked red then little wisps of white clouds sailed beneath the red'. She noted the drama of the sky — until the rain bucketed down: 'It simply came down mud so suddenly, resulting in every flower in the garden being ruined'.

Emus and other animals

In a letter to Jack, Nora, Josephine's younger sister, recounted the story of an emu visiting the garden while the family were busy baking honey biscuits in the kitchen:

The emu examined things from top to bottom ... walked around all the garden paths and made himself quite at home. Mother was out watering the garden in the evening and was most astonished when the emu came and lay down in the spray and just seemed to revel in it, we could not get him to come away.



Top and middle
The Cedars today,
photos Sandra
Kearney

Right Hans Heysen,
1877–1968, *A bowl
of roses*, 1924, oil on
canvas, Art Gallery
of New South Wales,
photo AGNSW
© C. Heysen

On another occasion, Freya, the second daughter, describes a scene as the family, armed with ladders, cases, tins, baskets and wheelbarrows, set out to gather apples from the orchard. The canny cows and horses, aware of what they were up to, followed behind. As the family returned from the orchard with their harvest of apples, they had to form a bodyguard around the barrows to keep the animals from stealing the fruit.

The Heysen family grew alongside, and in, the garden that was created at The Cedars. They, like other gardeners, experienced the highs and lows of gardening — plants thrived or sometimes died. From time to time dust storms created havoc, as did the heavy rains. Yet, the cycle of gardening, the productivity in the kitchen and the social events were all entwined. Josephine blossomed into a knowledgeable gardener alongside her mother. She had an artist's eye for the flowers and plants around her, describing an afternoon with the family on top of a green hill overlooking a perfect view:

we packed afternoon tea to take with us. Daddy was sketching, mother reading and Fif and Ted were bird nesting. It was a dream of a day, sky paraded in glorious blues with loose floating clouds, cows wading through clover knee deep and birds singing all around.

And here we'll leave Josephine, 'squatting against a tree, writing yet another letter' to Jack.

References

Colin Thiele, *Heysen of Hahndorf*, Rigby Limited, Adelaide, 1968.

Correspondence between Josephine, Nora and Freya Heysen to 'Jack' Whyte, 1921–1938, Heysen family records.

Sandra Kearney is a member of her local historical society, where her passion for gardening and garden history continues to be sustained. A favourite place to sit and ponder is The Cedars in Hahndorf. She previously studied horticulture with plantsmanship at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Scotland, where she also gained a diploma in garden history. She is now completing a PhD in history at Flinders University focusing on the work of the Red Cross Wounded and Missing Bureau in South Australia during the First World War.





Tim Gatehouse

Norfolk Island: the earliest surviving European agricultural landscapes in Australasia

Norfolk Island is known chiefly for its past as a convict settlement, as the home of the descendants of the HMS *Bounty* mutineers and for its eponymous pine trees. It is also the site of the oldest remaining European agricultural landscapes in Australasia. Its significance has been recognised by its listing on the World Heritage Register.

Settlement of Norfolk Island

Although archeological evidence shows that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a Polynesian settlement existed on the island known today as Norfolk Island, by the time of Captain Cook's landing in October 1774, the island – named after the Duchess of Norfolk – was uninhabited. His report of the suitability of the pine trees for ships'

masts and the potential for the flax plants to be used for sails and rope had prompted the British Government to include the colonisation of Norfolk Island in its instructions to Captain Arthur Phillip prior to the departure of the First Fleet.

Six weeks after the fleet's arrival at Sydney in January 1788, Phillip Gidley King and a small contingent of soldiers and convicts set out for Norfolk Island, arriving in March of that year. This was the first of three phases of European settlement of the island. Although the pine trees and flax plants did not live up to expectations, the island's rich soil soon proved its worth as a source of food for the settlement at Sydney, where initial attempts at farming had failed disastrously, bringing the colony to the verge of starvation. The earliest agricultural activity on Norfolk Island occurred in two valleys running north from the

The convict gardener's cottage in Father John McEnroe's garden, Soldier's Gully

All photographs were taken by the author.



Panorama of Water Mill Valley, showing top left, the dam, below the dam wall the ruins of the mill, the drainage channels and the very faint horizontal lines of the field boundaries.

settlement of Kingston, the landing place on the south coast. These were Arthur's Vale (named after Captain Arthur Phillips and now known as Water Mill Valley), and Soldier's Gully, to the east of Water Mill Valley, from which it is separated by a range of hills.

Water Mill Valley is approximately one kilometre in length with a varying width but averaging half a kilometre, its floor a level flood plain sloping gently south to the coast at Kingston. The Water Mill Stream runs through it to the sea. Cultivation of the area commenced with the clearing of just under five hectares in 1788, revealing a grove of banana trees. Since banana trees are only propagated from cuttings, this was an indication of the earlier presence of Polynesian inhabitants.

A plan of the valley was drawn in 1790 by George Rapier, a midshipman on HMS *Sirius*, who was stranded on the island when the ship was wrecked there that year. The vegetation had been cleared from the sides of the valley and a water mill built at its northern end. Apparently drawn before the construction of the mill, the plan depicts the channelled stream, the governor's garden and the government farm, with barns and animal enclosures and the Polynesian banana plantation. Running in an east–west direction across the valley are field boundaries, formed by planting parallel lines of banana plants and sugar cane on low earth mounds.

A later plan, drawn in 1796 by Deputy-Commissary William Chapman, records further agricultural development in the valley. The water mill and dam are clearly shown. The governor's garden, set out in neat rectangles, has expanded, as has the government farm, named on the plan as the 'public farm yard'. In it are located a barn and granary, sheds and a larger enclosure for cattle. Small cottages sit on the hillsides.

Despite Norfolk Island's initial success in the production of food, as agricultural production in New South Wales increased, its dependence on Norfolk Island diminished. Over the next decades the island's population was gradually transferred to New South Wales, and in 1814 the island was abandoned, the buildings burnt to prevent their occupation by a foreign power.

The second phase of settlement commenced in 1825, when the island was re-occupied as a penal settlement for convicts who had re-offended in New South Wales, and became notorious for the harshness of its regime. It was in this period that the major buildings in Kingston were constructed, the remains of the buildings in Arthur's Vale reinstated or replaced and farming revived.

Wheat, corn, barley, cabbages, oranges, lemons, coffee, tobacco, melons and bananas were grown on the government farm. The original water mill dam remained, but in 1828 a new two-storey stone mill was built to replace the first timber building. When the convict-powered crank mill was erected in 1844, and later a windmill, the water mill was no longer used. By 1890 the water mill was in ruins, although the dam continued to be used for water storage.

With transportation to Van Diemen's Land ceasing in 1853, Norfolk Island's function as a penal settlement ceased and its closure in 1855 marked the end of the second phase of European settlement. The third phase commenced the following year, when the descendants of the

Bounty mutineers were transferred to Norfolk Island from Pitcairn Island, which could no longer support the growing population. The Pitcairn Islanders took over the penal settlement buildings, drawing lots for the occupation of the houses in Kingston and the cottages on the hillsides of Watermill Valley. Their descendants remain on the island to this day.

Soldier's Gully

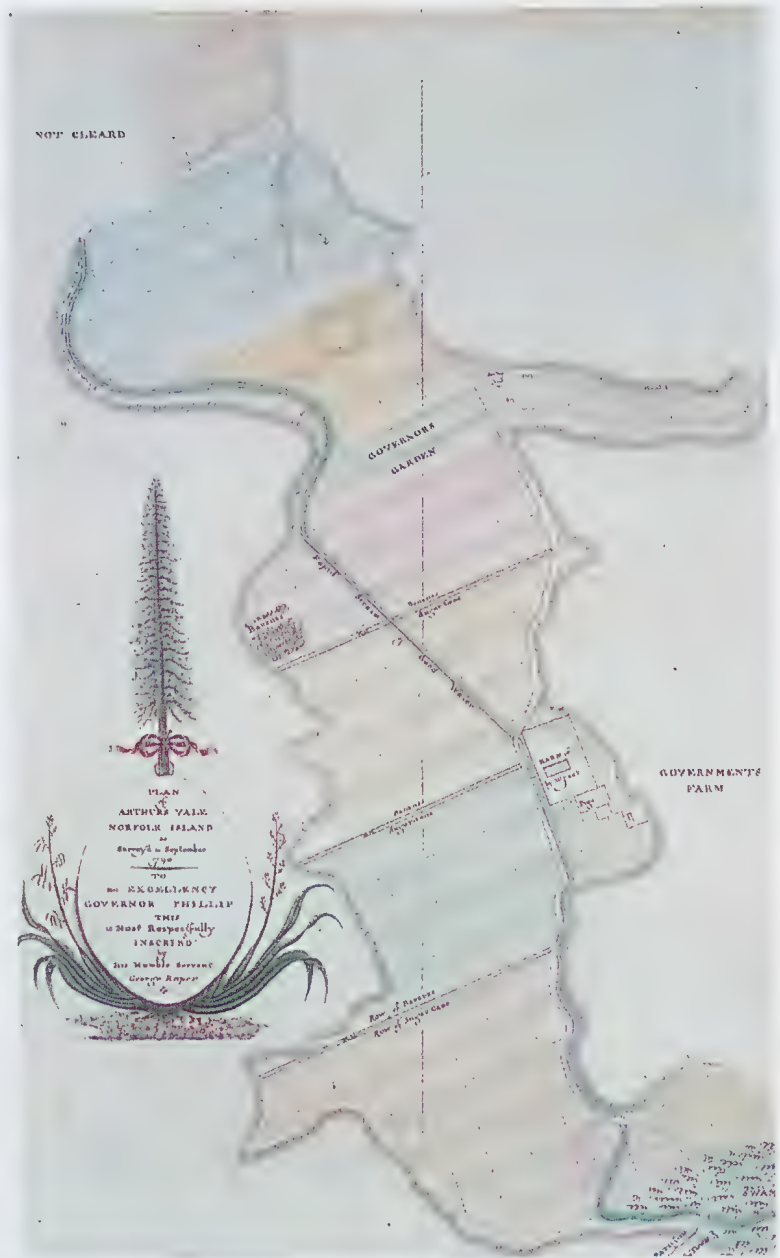
The other early site of agriculture, Soldier's Gully, was farmed from 1791, during the first settlement period. The land was allocated to four ticket-of-leave men, who had arrived with King in 1788. During the second settlement the gully was reserved for garden plots to encourage the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. The lower levels closer to Kingston were allocated to the senior military officers and to the Protestant and Catholic clergymen, with the upper levels to soldiers. Huts were built on the allotments for the soldiers and for the convict servants who tended the officers' and clergymen's gardens. The stream running down the gully provided water and drainage.

Most of the huts were constructed from timber and have disappeared, but the one-room stone cottage built in the Catholic clergyman's garden for his convict servant has survived, along with the ruins of the fowl pen and pigsties. In the cleared space in front of the hut are traces of a rectangular drainage system, probably the remains of a vegetable garden. This small farming complex was built for Father John McEnroe, who arrived on the island from Sydney in 1838 and who was recalled in 1841. The buildings are accurately depicted in plans dated 1839, drawn by Lieutenant Henry Lugard of the Royal Engineers. On the hilltop which separates Arthur's Vale from Soldier's Gully are several underground silos for storing farm produce.

Conclusion

Although cultivation of the government farm at Sydney pre-dated the commencement of agriculture on Norfolk Island by a few weeks, the Sydney site has now been totally transformed by its inclusion in the Botanic Gardens. At Parramatta, John Macarthur's house, Elizabeth Farm, and James Ruse's cottage survive, but the land they farmed has been overtaken by suburbia. First settled in 1796, some of the land along the Hawkesbury River is still farmed, but this post-dates the settlement of Norfolk Island.

Today cattle roam freely over the pastures in Water Mill Valley, as they do over the whole



island. The dam built in 1790 still holds water. The extensive ruins of the second mill stand just below the wall, and adjacent to it sit the stone foundations of the original wooden mill. The drainage channels leading to the stream remain, as do the earth mounds on which the field boundaries were planted. Throughout the valley are dotted the stone ruins of the farm buildings and the cottages inhabited by the ticket-of-leave men who worked the farm. The produce of this intensively farmed valley saved the infant colony of New South Wales from starvation and was the forerunner of the pastoral economy on which Australia's early prosperity was built.

Raper plan of Water Mill Valley (then called Arthur's Vale). Note that the plan includes stylised depictions of a Norfolk Island pine and a flax plant, the reasons for the island's colonisation.

Tim Gatehouse is a retired lawyer interested in the pre-goldrush history of Victoria, architectural history and the history of gardening. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals.



The blade – Australia's love affair with lawn

Richard Heathcote

Perhaps the most remarkable shared element in both celebrity and vernacular gardens is the ubiquity of the lawn. Indeed, lawn grass should be viewed as the most important plant ornament in the Modern era.

Stephen Forbes

Lawn has played a significant role in Australian social history, becoming a status symbol to which all could aspire. Consider the setting of our federal Parliament House or the government houses in each state, or the superbly maintained turf for our iconic sports, whether in stadiums, on golf courses or local ovals. Regardless of irrigation issues, Australia has hundreds of thousands of hectares of lawn under cultivation.

A travelling exhibition organised by the Australian Museum of Gardening at Carrick Hill, *The Blade* aims to contribute to the Australian Garden History Society's 40th anniversary program by tracing the story of lawn and how this popular garden feature arose.

First peoples and grasses

For over forty millennia Australia's first nation people learnt and understood the value of grasses. As Zena Cumpston explained in the January 2020 issue of *Australian Garden History*, earlier Australian Aboriginal cultures collected grass seed for food and bread making. Interestingly, while the languages of Australia's Indigenous people have no words for farming, agriculture or gardening, research conducted by anthropologist Bill Gammage reveals that all these activities were taking place when Europeans began visiting Australia, from the seventeenth century onwards.

Australia's first lawns

Fire was the first tool used for grass management by Aboriginal Australians, for when the plant regenerates, the tender new shoots attract the kangaroos to graze, enabling men to trap and kill them. Just as Indigenous Australians were primarily interested in how grasses could support

their subsistence, early colonists used grass for ornamental purposes around their homes in Sydney Cove and on the harbour's edge, as depicted by artists like Conrad Martens and George Peacock. Colonial officials and their families would have known of the ideas of Humphry Repton in his *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803) and from J.C. Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822). Or perhaps it was their memories of great parks and aristocratic homes in their native Britain that prompted these new Australians to create grassed areas.

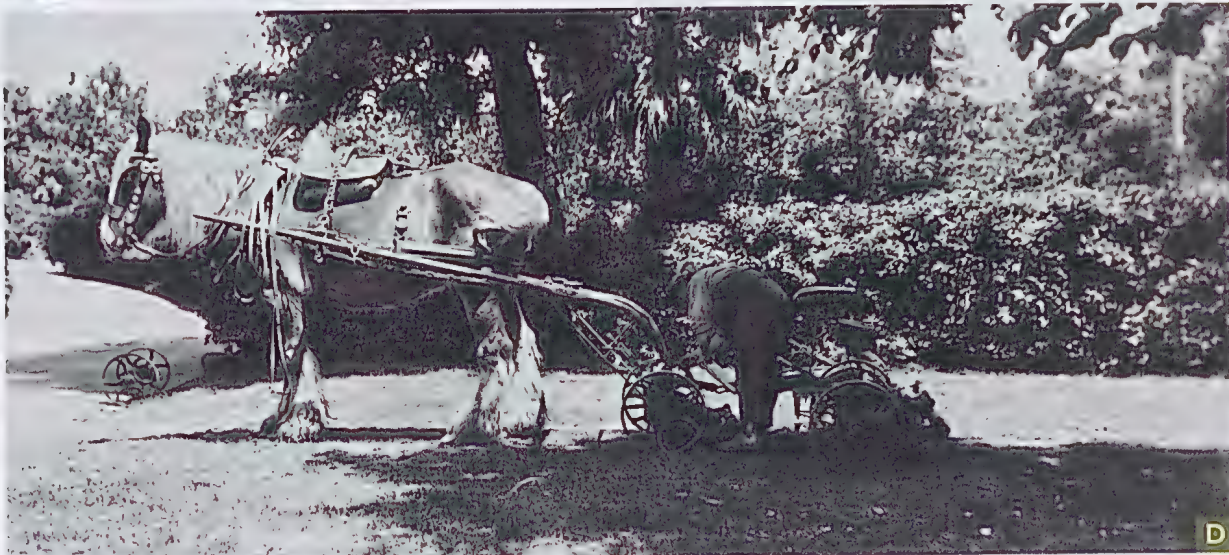
Government House – power lawns

By the mid-nineteenth century all six Australian colonies had established government houses, with adjacent domains or a botanic garden in close proximity. These lavish grassed settings expressed ease and order, a calm centre of colonial government. Imposing and gracious, the lawn terraces were settings designed for garden parties for visiting dignitaries and charitable functions for wider society.

These were power lawns, where important discussions were held, and their care and upkeep was a matter of considerable importance. Until the lawn mower arrived, grass was cut by teams of scythe men, after which it was raked and then rolled. Sometimes it was just left to the sheep to mow the lawns.

Two men went to mow, went to mow a meadow

The scythe, sickle and shears, tools traceable to pre-Roman times, all rely on sharpened metal edges to cut grass. From medieval times the scythe men of the folk song worked in teams to mow meadows and harvest crops, but from the eighteenth century they were also essential for grass cutting in parks and gardens – until the



- A Joseph Lycett, 1774–1828, *Aborigines Using Fire to Hunt Kangaroo*, c.1820, watercolour (courtesy National Library of Australia)
- B A.H. Fulwood, 1863–1930, *Government House, Perth*, 1908–09, watercolour
- C Edwin Beard Budding with his lawnmower, patented by him in 1830 (Pictorial Press/Alamy stock photo)
- D A man adjusting a horse-drawn mower, NSW, c.1925 (Museums Victoria Collections)



invention of the lawn mower by the English engineer Edwin Budding. With its manufacture beginning in 1830, the lawn mower was a game changer, transforming how grass was used and maintained in British and Australian gardens. The patent for Budding's machine explained:

a new combination and application of machinery for the purpose of cropping or shearing vegetable surfaces of lawns, grass plots, and pleasure grounds, constituting a machine that could be used with advantage instead of a scythe for that purpose.

Victorian Britain embraced the new gardening tool and by the 1860s thousands of machines were being manufactured, with lawnmowers finding their way to Australia towards the end of the century. The engineering firms, Ransomes of Ipswich (1832) and Thomas Green & Son in Leeds, led the field, the latter patenting the first chain-driven mower in 1842. Budding's earlier machine had relied on noisy cast-iron cogs and gears, whereas Green's machine, which was named 'Silens Messor' (or Silent Cutter), used chain to drive the blades noiselessly.

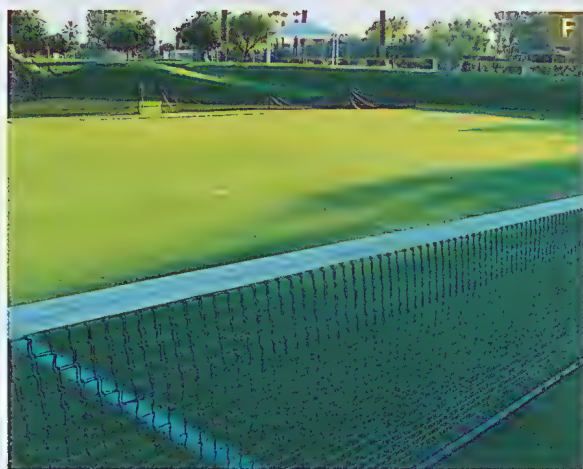
Lawn sports and improved playing surfaces

The Budding patent did not apply north of the border, enabling the Scottish firm of Shanks of Arbroath to begin production in 1842 of the first pony-drawn mower, leading to the development of 'lawn mowing horse boots', a product designed to protect the grass from hooves. On some occasions the mower would be dragged by a man, giving rise to the term 'shanks's pony'. More significant was the width of Shanks's machine (42 inches, or 1070 mm), developed specifically for Scottish financier and landowner William Carnegie's broad acres. Pulled by a pony, this large mower could mow and roll a hectare in under three hours.

From the 1880s horse-drawn gang mowers — a configuration of several mowing units, first towed by a horse and later by tractors — were used in Australian botanic gardens.

In 1920s Australia, an Adelaide company was selling a range of push, motor and gang motors, but with typical Australian ingenuity they added to the history of mowing technology. The firm of Scott Bonnar Ltd had been established in the aftermath of the First World War by Malcom Bonnar and his brother Scott and in 1923 they made their first electric-powered mower, by mounting an electric motor onto an old Green's mower.

Quiet and efficient, it was used at the Glenelg Bowling Club with great success, improving



the cut far beyond the previous hand finish. Scott Bonnar soon sold machines to two more Adelaide bowling clubs, continuing to do so for the next fifty years, by which time the company was supplying ninety-nine per cent of the 4000 bowling greens in Australia. Their Adelaide factory had showrooms in all states and they also exported successfully, especially to South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

In the domestic market, in addition to the bowling clubs, Scott Bonnar supplied and serviced mowing equipment to state and federal government departments, ovals, golf- and racecourses. The gang mower prompted a boom in our country's passion for field sports.

Carrick Hill's new garden gets a motor mower

On the first day of June in 1940, as winter began in Adelaide, Mr E.W. (Bill) Hayward's order for a Scott Bonnar motor mower was delivered to his Springfield address. Carrick Hill, the house that Bill and Ursula Hayward (née Barr Smith) began to build in 1937, was on a forty-three-hectare hillside block in the foothills of the Mount Lofty Ranges. Although there had been delays in the construction of the house – a bankrupt builder and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 – it is interesting to see that the landscaping of the garden and grounds must have been sufficiently advanced to require a brand-new, petrol-driven motor mower to cut the lawn terraces and tennis court.

Bill had been a 'tennis blue' at St Peter's College, meaning that a lawn tennis court was an essential garden feature for his social life in Adelaide. Indeed, a lawn tennis court in country Australia was a crucial meeting place, an opportunity for communities to play tennis and socialise, and perhaps even conduct business. More than a place to meet and socialise, the game of tennis had become important in the Australian psyche, a consequence of Australian lawn tennis players winning Wimbledon, beginning, in the early years of the century, with Norman Brookes, followed in the 1950s and 1960s by Lew Hoad, Ken Rosewall and Rod Laver, not forgetting the Wimbledon women – Margaret Court and Evonne Goolagong.

Although Australian greenkeepers had their eyes firmly fixed on English grass lawn seed, Mr Hayward's tennis court at Carrick Hill probably used couch grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), considered acceptable for playing surfaces in Australian conditions. The question of a grass



E Clare Leighton, 1898–1989, *Scything*, 1935, wood engraving, from *Four Hedges: A gardener's chronicle* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1935). Reproduced courtesy of the artist's estate (image courtesy Wakefield Press, reproduced in Trevor Nottle's *Endless pleasure*, 2015)

F Summer tennis, rocor (Creative Commons CC BY-NC 2.0)

G Lawn bowls, Lewis Clarke (Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0)

H Illustration from cover of ATCO manual (image courtesy Wakefield Press, reproduced in Trevor Nottle's *Endless Pleasure*, 2015)

I Sunbeam twin rotary electric mower, 18-inch, 1959, photo by Sara Huffen (image courtesy Carrick Hill)



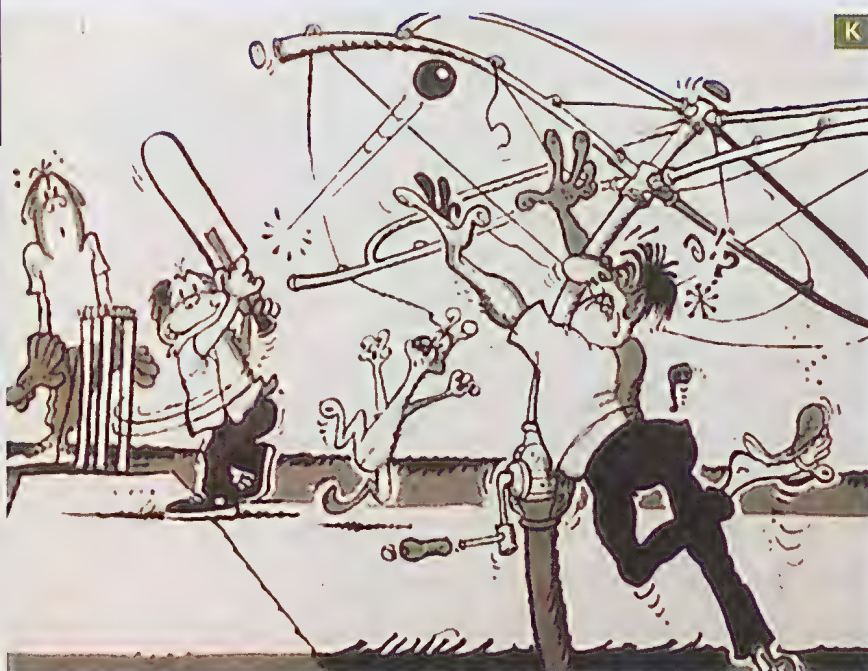
suitable for South Australian lawns had been answered the previous century. In 1872, following trials held at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, the director Richard Schomburgk had pronounced that couch grass could withstand 'the scorching heat of summer months' and provided 'a beautiful green and close lawn', giving summer gardens a 'cheering aspect' in the driest capital in Australia.

The backyard lawn

In the 1920s, the *Australian Gardener*, which had been published regularly by Brunings from the mid-nineteenth century, changed its market focus. With the rising popularity of amateur gardening amongst returned servicemen after the First World War, the professional gardener was no longer considered their target audience. The nineteenth edition of the magazine (1920) kept the section on laying out tennis courts, but the pages on general lawn care had increased. Both productive and ornamental gardening subjects were covered, but the suburbs were expanding, and lawn in the backyard, as well as in the front garden, was being encouraged. Another new invention, the rotary clothes hoist, changed the way laundry was dried, and grass below was kinder than dust. A grassed backyard was also a cooler and gentler surface for children's games.

Tariff tale and the last hurrah of the cylinder mower

A decade after the First World War the Commonwealth Government was keen to encourage the nation to become more self-sufficient in manufacturing. Following negotiations over the heavy tariffs to be imposed on future mower imports, Qualcast Ltd of Derby, a successful manufacturer of low-cost side-wheel mowers, agreed to set up a factory in Footscray, Victoria. Shipping an entire new plant (an exact duplicate of the Derby works) to Australia, Qualcast was opened on 6 October 1930 by the acting prime minister, James Fenton. The factory had a weekly production capacity of 500 lawn mowers and employed 150 local people. By 1934 Australian-produced mowers were selling at two-thirds the cost of imported mowers.



The Victa story: turning grass into lawn

A 1952 invention changed the way Australian grass was mown: no longer was it cut vertically with helical blades but now with a petrol-driven machine using horizontal or rotary-cutting blades.

Working in Sydney, Mervyn Victor Richardson developed a prototype that became known as the 'peach tin' mower, and from this, the following year, came the Victa Rotary Mower. Although not the first of its kind, it was cheaper, lighter and easier to use than its predecessors. With the growth of post-war suburbia, demand for the mower was high, prompting Richardson to form his business Victa Mowers Pty Ltd. Fifty years on, 6.5 million Victa mowers had been sold in thirty countries around the world.

Earlier attitudes of turf being considered a hallowed space, where 'Keep Off the Grass' signage was used, were reversed in the 1960s. In Melbourne's CBD in 1960, lawn was used to liberate urban space and, despite criticism of extravagance (especially by Jeff Kennett, the Opposition Leader), the public wholeheartedly embraced the concept. The force behind the temporary grassing of Swanston Street during Rupert Hamer's premiership in Victoria was the environmental champion, planner and conservation visionary, Professor David Yencken. The project was so successful and so well received in the Garden State that a pedestrian precinct was created in front of Melbourne's Town Hall, a forerunner of today's traffic-reduction policy the city continues to pursue.

Thankfully, in the twenty-first century our parks and gardens sport fewer 'Keep off the Grass' signs.

Final resting place – the grassy plot

An observation on the use of grass in Australia at the end of our lives marks a fitting end to this brief encounter with lawns and their accoutrements. In 1855 Adolphus Strauch introduced the lawn cemetery in Cincinnati as a landscape arrangement, dispensing with headstones and other memorials in favour of a unifying flat lawn with sunken plaques, to indicate the resting places of the buried. Gardens and trees were located on the perimeter of the cemetery.

Australia's first lawn cemetery was established at Enfield, an Adelaide suburb, in 1948. Whether for maintenance efficiencies or merely to reduce the cost of burial plots is not clear. Perhaps a line from seventeenth-century English poet Andrew Marvel in his poem 'The garden' reflects today's trend away from floral tributes at funerals and less ornamental resting places:

Ensna'r'd by flowers I fall on grass.



J Victa 'peach tin' prototype rotary lawn mower, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, gift of Victa, 1984, photographer Penelope Clay

K Hills hoist cartoon, Hills Industries (courtesy Ames Australasia)

L Woman with Victa mower in backyard, c. 1960, photograph, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, gift of Victa, 1984, photographer Kate Pollard

M Keep off the grass, audi-inspiration (Creative Commons CC BY 2.0)



God willing, the exhibition will travel to Canberra Museum & Gallery and be on display there between 20 November and 20 February 2021 and at the New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale, from 11 June to 15 August 2021.

Richard Heathcote is the Director of Benefaction at Carrick Hill Historic House and Garden located at Springfield in Adelaide's foothills. His current project is curating the Blade exhibition and tour for the Australian Museum of Gardening.





Liz Bennetto

Geelong Botanic Gardens: a walk through three centuries

Hitchcock Fountain,
photo Friends
of the Geelong
Botanic Gardens

Eastern Hill, on the edge of Corio Bay, was set aside in 1851 as the location for Geelong's botanic garden. Although it had spectacular views over the bay, it was exposed to harsh winds and had no available fresh water. The Wadawurrung people had cared for this land for 60,000 years, and it had provided food, medicine, tools and clothing. Near the Gardens, middens provide evidence of a diet rich in plants, seafood and land animals.

A survey undertaken in 1838 described the land as 'lightly wooded [with] gum and wattle'. However, neighbouring lime kilns consumed much of the available timber, and by 1851 there was little vegetation.

Nineteenth century: establishment 1851

Geelong Botanic Gardens is the fourth oldest botanic garden in Australia, after Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne. A committee of management was appointed in 1852 and the nursery site was selected, with paths laid out and a curator's cottage built before the arrival of Daniel Bunce, in 1857.

Daniel Bunce had spent some time in Hobart as a nurseryman and amateur botanist. He was very interested in the plants and people of Australia, having studied the Aboriginal languages and accompanying Leichhardt on one expedition, investigating plants and collecting seed. Bunce became a defender of the Aboriginal people at a time when many Europeans considered them to be ignorant savages.

As the first curator, Bunce planted and developed Eastern Hill as an extensive park to be surrounded by windbreaks, with shrubberies planted along the carriageways.

A conservatory was constructed (1859), followed by a 'pit glasshouse' (1860) and an aviary (1864). In 1862, Bunce established a small lake, where he installed black swans and ducks.

The 1960 *Catalogue of plants under cultivation in Geelong Botanic Gardens* listed more than 2000 species, including Australian native plants, which Bunce shared with other botanic gardens.

An article in Geelong's *Advertiser* in December 1863, reported:

To those who have not paid our Botanical Gardens a visit ... we say go at once. A rare treat is in store there for the most phlegmatic of mortals. What with the hum of bees, the chirping of small birds, the clear full notes of the magpies, the gorgeous panorama of varied hues and the delightful perfumes ... [it] seems to be a terrestrial paradise ... where nought but happiness ... (barring the mosquitoes, by-the-by) may be found.

Many of Geelong's prized heritage trees were planted during this period, notably, the magnificent *Ginkgo biloba*, *Jubaea chilensis*, *Fagus sylvatica* *purpurea*, *Quillaja saponaria* and *Corymbia maculata*. More than fifty trees in Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park have been listed on the National Trust Significant Tree Register.

Changes occurred when John Raddenberry (1872–1896) replaced many eucalypts with English trees and added new and rare species to the collection. He added garden structures: a large octagonal picnic rotunda, overlooking the beach; a smaller rotunda (still standing); and a thatched summerhouse, which provided 'private' access to the ladies' toilet. A replica of the summerhouse can be seen today.

Raddenberry's major addition was an enormous timber lattice fernery, with a pond, which he surrounded with a rockery of ferns and foliage plants. The fernery was reputed to hold the largest collection of ferns in the Southern Hemisphere. In this period of 'fern mania', Raddenberry's 1888 collection of herbarium specimens, 'The Fern Book', was compiled. Rediscovered in the ceiling of the Gardens' office, it is currently under restoration at Geelong Heritage Centre.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897) was marked by the planting of an imposing avenue of *Ulmus minor* 'variegata' along the carriageway that led to the nineteenth-century entrance. Some of these unusual trees remain today.



John Raddenberry



Top Daniel Bunce, photo Trove

Bottom Ginkgo tree, photo Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens

Twentieth century: fountains, buildings, bequests, extensions

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of reduced budgets and limited development for the Gardens. Market Square was becoming an important shopping centre, so in 1912 its fountains were relocated to the Gardens. At the same time, the Queen Victoria statue, also in Market Square, was moved to Eastern Park. The Customs House (1838), one of the oldest buildings in Victoria, originally from the waterfront, had been moved to the city in 1854, where it became the Telegraph Office. By 1889, it too had been moved to the Gardens. The Cabman's Shelter (1905) came to Eastern Park from its original site in the city in 1929. In 1997, a grant was obtained for its restoration.

The period between 1945 and 1960 saw the demolition of the old fernery, which was falling into disrepair. By 1960, the Gardens had nearly doubled in size, with extensions to the south and west. The rose gardens were established, the A.L. Walter Conservatory was constructed, and new gates were donated by a grateful Danish migrant.

The sculptures of the Japanese cranes that had previously graced the driveway of the historic property, St Albans Homestead (1873), and more recently Eastern Beach, were moved into the Gardens. The bequest of the Florence E. Clarke Geranium Conservatory in 1972 saw increased interest in the geranium and pelargonium collections.

The Friends

In 1985, after a particularly dry summer, with voluntary hand-watering of the Gardens, the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens was formed. The Friends worked to improve the facilities, seeking finance for the construction and staffing of a teahouse. The rose gardens were redeveloped with the assistance of the Heritage Rose Society, and a dazzling perennial border was developed. A group of trained guides and a nursery to support the Gardens were also established at this time.

As strong advocates for Geelong Botanic Gardens, the Friends recognised the need for public awareness of its scientific, educational, recreational and conservation functions. Programs were planned, activities arranged, and funds were raised from such events as the popular summer program, 'Music in the Gardens', regular botanic art classes, special talks and trips.

The Friends lobbied for renewed Council attention to the Gardens, culminating in an evaluation and master plan for conservation and development, undertaken by Chris Dance Land



Design and jointly funded by the Friends and the City in 1995. The main recommendations of the study were to:

- open up the Gardens towards the city and Corio Bay, incorporating plants appropriate for the environment
- redevelop 'Bunce's Lake', collecting the precious stormwater, which had previously drained into the bay
- reconnect with Eastern Park's history
- promote education, conservation and ecology.

An advisory committee, which included two representatives of the Friends, advanced the implementation of the master plan. The City's Department of Environment and Recreation appointed John Arnott as the new curator to lead work on the master plan, with Chris Dance as design consultant.

Twenty-first century: new ideas and a new look

Work on the 21st Century Garden began in 2000 and proceeded swiftly with the enthusiastic involvement of the entire Gardens' team. The basic principles of the design were to open up the Gardens to the city and the waterfront and to promote plants adapted to drought conditions. Indigenous plants and local materials were to



be featured. The main planting themes were designed to focus on regional relevance, plant adaptation and plant evolution.

The opening of the 21st Century Garden in September 2002 created huge interest – and some controversy – with both locals and visitors. It was unlike the traditional European botanic garden and some people were shocked by the stark landscaping and the absence of lush green lawns, but it was eye-catching and innovative. The 21st Century Garden soon became an important tourist attraction in the Geelong area.

Renewing Eastern Park

Annette Zealley arrived as the new Director in 2007, and work continued on stage two of the master plan, with an increased focus on Eastern Park. Senescent trees were replaced, and original avenues of the park restored.

A new stormwater-harvesting facility enhanced the park, as well as supplying water for the Gardens and other plantings in the city. On the site of Bunce's lake, there is now an attractive expanse of reclaimed water, edged with indigenous plants and enjoyed by water birds.

With help from the Friends, grants were obtained for the rejuvenation of the 1880s rotunda and the 'ladies' kiosk'. In 2019, the reconstructed

Walter Conservatory was opened, and a new visitor facility built for the many groups who use the Gardens. In 2019, the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens received a Heritage Victoria award for their outstanding support of the Gardens.

A walk through three centuries

Visitors to Geelong Botanic Gardens today approach the gates through a modern regional grassland drive. Unique metal gates and sculptures mark the entry to the 21st Century Garden, created around a basin of granitic sand and local rocks. Through the Hansen Gates is the twentieth-century garden, with its sweeping lawns, feature trees, the conservatory, the teahouse and the new visitor facility.

Iconic urns and a fountain mark the entry to the original nineteenth-century garden, where colourful beds of flowers, magnificent heritage trees and interesting historic buildings can be seen. A visit to Geelong Botanic Gardens is certainly a rewarding trip back into the past!

Left Ladies Kiosk, photo Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens

Right 21st Century Garden, photo Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens

For information about visiting the Gardens, guided walks and other Friends' activities, visit the website: www.friendsgbg.org.au

Liz Bennetto is a voluntary guide at Geelong Botanic Gardens.





Andy Russell

A sheep station garden, Barunah Plains, 1978

Above Detail: view of the homestead Barunah Plains from the croquet lawn.

Opposite

A The wisteria-clad verandah facing the croquet lawn frames the oldest part of the homestead. 'Shot Silk' roses graced this entrance.

B View of the homestead Barunah Plains from the croquet lawn.

C&D Looking from either end of the same section of the garden. Various roses are backed by a privet hedge, with a large yellow banksia rose on the tank stand (D).

E&F (Left) Sweet peas, broad beans and rhubarb in the vegetable garden. (Right) Looking towards the orchard.

All photos by Leith Russell and Andy Russell.

The property of Barunah Plains in southwestern Victoria is situated on the Hamilton Highway about fifty kilometres from Geelong. It was first settled by Europeans in the early 1840s, and was acquired by my family, the Russell family, in 1850, at which time it was 22,275 hectares. A major reduction in size occurred when the Soldier Settlement Commission acquired 9,300 hectares in 1948. The family held the property till late 1978 and ran merino sheep, a fine wool merino stud, Hereford and Devon cattle, and grew crops. The homestead and garden were outstanding features of the property. This article presents a picture of the garden as it was in 1978.

The spring-fed waterholes of Warrambine Creek would have been an attractive option in choosing a site to build a home on these open basalt plains. While the current homestead dates to 1866, with later extensions, there must have been an earlier building, although little evidence of this remains.

The garden covered about two hectares, with an additional outer area with creek frontage of about one-and-a-half hectares. A white gravel driveway led to the front entrance of the homestead. From the east-facing door of the home, an expanse of lawn, dotted with trees, could be seen. These include an Atlas cedar, which I recall being used as a Christmas tree. A silky oak was near the tennis court, while beyond the court there were some large eucalypts. A large elm tree gave generous shade to the tennis spectators.

Credit is due to the women who managed this garden. These were Annie Florence (Winkie) Russell, née Wright, who lived there from 1882 to 1950, Nell Russell, née Salmon, from 1921 to 1965, and Erica Russell, née Burston, from 1965 to 1978.

In 1978 the paths were bordered by low hedges and rose beds on the west side of the homestead. A large climbing banksia rose grew on a tank stand. Nearby was a century-old elm, outside the bluestone storerooms. Wisteria climbed high up a windmill stand.

The garden included a productive vegetable garden and an orchard. Fruit was often preserved to provide off-season supplies. A very large cherry-plum tree provided fruit for jam making.

At the northwest corner of the homestead was a large leaning blue, or Colorado, spruce (*Picea pungens*). Nearby, a bunya pine flanked the path towards the footbridge over Warrambine Creek in the outer garden. From the footbridge — if you are lucky — to this day you may see a platypus. In earlier days turkeys, ducks and geese had their runs and sheds in the outer garden.

Andy Russell, who lives in Canberra, grew up at Barunah Plains. After jackerooing in Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory, he returned to work with the family business for thirteen years until it was sold late in 1978. He moved to the grazing property Buronga at Cootamundra, which he operated for twenty-one years. Since retiring in 2000, he has followed his interest in native plants and now volunteers with the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP), a regional botanic garden at the National Arboretum, Canberra.





A



B



C



D



E



F



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Beverley F. Ronalds

Nathaniel Ronalds: nurseryman and florist

Ronalds Central Pty
Ltd business card,
c. 1933 (courtesy
Ronald family
papers)

Nathaniel Ronalds (1840–1898) was an accomplished Victorian horticulturalist and florist. He is little remembered today, but his career can be traced with the aid of the many newspaper articles of the period that described his work, as well as original resources held by his descendants. Talented, hard-working and largely self-taught, he created five nurseries during his lifetime and cultivated numerous new plants to supply his renowned floral studio in Melbourne's city centre. The business continued in the family for a century and has a legacy in several gardens at Mount Macedon.

Beginnings

Born on 7 April 1840 near Uttoxeter in Staffordshire, Nathaniel was the second surviving son of Alfred Ronalds, a fly fishing author.

The family moved to rural Wales when Nathaniel was three, and he was aged eight when they migrated to Victoria. Any formal schooling Nathaniel may have had probably ended in the upheaval of the goldrush, which began when he was eleven.

Nathaniel's father established the first nursery in the new township of Ballarat, with Nathaniel, now aged fourteen, and his brothers doing much of the physical work on the 2.2-hectare site beside Lake Wendouree. Although Alfred had little horticultural experience, together the family experimented successfully with a wide range of common and novel vegetables, fruit, herbs, spices and farm crops for the settlers. Horticulture quickly became Nathaniel's passion.

Alfred died when Nathaniel was twenty and the nursery diversified briefly into prize-winning cut flowers and bouquets, which were to remain Nathaniel's specialty. The following year his older brother leased and then sold the nursery for a



Nathaniel Ronalds,
Chapman & Co.,
Melbourne (courtesy
Ronald family papers)

fraction of its worth. With no work and no money, Nathaniel moved to Melbourne and gained employment with George Brunning at his St Kilda Nurseries. In 1863 Ronalds received his inaugural first prize at a city horticultural exhibition for a table bouquet.

The florists' nursery

A year later, Ronalds established the Excelsior Nursery on Westbank Terrace, at Hawthorn Bridge over the Yarra. Leasing the site, which was just under a hectare, he made improvements valued at £350, including a large greenhouse, shelters and frames. It was 'a florists' nursery', with a typical bouquet selling for half a crown, but he also sold pot plants, ferns, trees and hedging. He soon became well known, with regular references to his achievements in the press.

He introduced novel plants very soon after they debuted in Britain: as his widow explained years later, 'the rarer the varieties the better', to ensure the most desirable floral art. One plant that he propagated in large numbers for sale was 'the beautiful new climber', *Tacsonia van volxemii*, while others included the coleus 'Queen Victoria' and a violet called 'The Czar'. The verbenas he raised were named after family, friends and royalty, and he gave the name *ronaldsii* to new

varieties of coleus, croton, davallia, *Erica tricolor* and verbenas. His first donations to Melbourne's botanical gardens were in 1865 and both these and the Tasmanian botanical gardens displayed his plants for some years. In this period he also landscaped and planted St Vincent Gardens in Albert Park and began serving on committees of the Horticultural Society of Victoria.

In August 1871 Ronalds opened an outlet on Collins Street in the city, which was quickly noticed for its 'elegant floral display' of rare and valuable specimens. Earlier that year the Ronalds family had won a protracted equity suit, which returned ownership of the Ballarat nursery to them, and the sheriff had put the property up for auction, but, in a final legal twist, it was lost. The money that Ronalds had relied upon for his expansion disappeared and he was declared insolvent. The 'assignee' sold his Excelsior Nursery business to his landlord for just £15. Ronalds's 'prodigious energy' could be transformed to volatility and imprudence under pressure and, armed with a revolver, he refused for a time to give up possession.

The Excelsior Nursery was 'a scene of desolation' when he was able to resume business in mid-1872. With 'energy and perseverance', he built a new greenhouse, propagating house, stove, plant sheds and cottage and filled the beds with 'choice' plants. Unable to keep the property, the following year he became head gardener of Richard Virgoe's Chatsworth estate in Brighton. Aided by 'two men and a boy', he made 'great alterations and improvements' in the garden layout, 'reflecting great credit upon Mr. Ronalds', and won prizes for his vegetables.

Another nursery

In 1877, he was able to again establish his own nursery, purchasing half a hectare on New Street, near the corner of Bay Street, in Brighton. The results of his 'indefatigable industry' were described eighteen months later: in addition to building the horticultural infrastructure, 'Every inch of ground is cropped'. He was selling 800 bouquets a month, with many being made by his nieces, and his 'clever' 'miniature gardens' were also popular.

Several years later he bought another block of land, about the same size, nearby and was able to employ two experienced gardeners. By this time he had accumulated 'every species [of florists' flowering plants and ferns] ... obtainable in the colony, and several that are not to be found elsewhere'. Orchids were a special feature: he had 400 varieties and was arranging for more to be collected in the Pacific Islands.



Triumphal arch
(*Melbourne Punch*,
1895, p. 288, State
Library of Victoria)

Mount Macedon properties

He reopened a city florist in 1884 and, in mid-1886, he purchased another property at the foot of Mount Macedon. With one of its boundaries being today's Mount Macedon Road and the others Turritable and Childers roads, this property was just over nine hectares in size, with a creek running through its length and containing an old farmhouse. The property was named Dreamthorpe by a later owner. The cooler climate and fertile loam suited many of his plants and there was a convenient train station for daily deliveries to Melbourne.

Over a long weekend in December, Ronalds hosted a christening ceremony for his new property with associates, and his health and success were toasted with champagne. By that time he had cleared the land, irrigated it with gravity-fed furrows, and landscaped it artistically with small lakes for water lilies and other aquatics. The many ferns were soon joined by 400 varieties of roses, and just under half a hectare of *Agapanthus umbellatus*, and he was 'cultivating bulbs on a scale without precedent in this colony'. He had also planted a *Cupressus lambertiana* hedge, *Clethra arborea* and Japanese maples, scarlet oaks, and other trees for their

autumn foliage and berries. He then expanded further, purchasing around half a hectare across the street on Brougham Road, this property now called Apsley.

In late 1891, he offered the Brighton Nursery for sale, citing 'failing health' for wishing to consolidate at Macedon. Also on auction was the lease of the city florist shop, which was £520 per annum. His timing was unfortunate: land prices had soared in the 1880s, when he had made his most recent acquisitions, and then crashed in 1891. Numerous banks collapsed and others foreclosed on mortgages. Ronalds was unable to realise suitable prices and was again insolvent, with the assignees disposing of both his Brighton and principal Macedon properties. He now focused on the Brougham Road land, again organising irrigation from the creek and establishing a pond, cool shed and new plantings, and leasing an additional 1.8 hectares nearby.

In late 1895 Ronalds Florist was commissioned to erect a triumphal arch for the arrival of the new governor to the colony. At twenty-one metres wide and twelve metres high, the 'magnificent arch' spanning Princes Bridge was 'beautifully decorated with flowers' and was a worthy culmination of his life's work. He had already



passed the city business to his daughter, Emily, and a colleague, and he died not long afterwards, on 25 October 1898, at the age of fifty-eight.

Nathaniel and the Ronalds family suffered personal heartbreak as well as business despair. His first wife had died suddenly in the year they were married and his second wife had poisoned herself in distress when Emily was very ill. His third wife, Agnes, née Small, had five young children when he died – Mary (called Molly), Lily, Ivy, Lindsay, and Ralph, who was just a month old. She was a widow for forty-seven years.

His legacy

The whole family continued Ronalds's work after his death. Two of his great-nieces became partners in Ronalds Central Florist and others joined the staff. Due to the patronage of the governor, the shop was branded as 'the Vice-Regal florists', and newspapers frequently commented on the themed window displays and latest designs by the 'art florists'. Function organisers and even brides would advise the press when their floral decoration was by Ronalds, signifying its quality. The large team made almost 100 bouquets for a ball in 1906.

It became 'One of Melbourne's most famous shops'; the 'walls were always interesting for the numerous pictures of famous theatrical personalities who had been their clients'.

The firm continued into the 1970s, although there was no family involvement in its last years.

Agnes was particularly important in extending her late husband's legacy. She took over his final nursery, aided by her 'three small daughters, who are being carefully taught the easier lessons of the florist's work'. Lily and Ivy opened their own florist businesses in the city and taught floral art. Molly created Brookdale garden and nursery, adjacent to her parents' two Macedon nurseries, where she lived almost until her death in 1976. The boys had similar homes nearby.

Dreamthorpe, Brookdale and Apsley remain garden estates today and the first two have featured in *Australian Garden History*. They are reminders of a family that was 'a horticultural institution in Victoria'.

Left Memorial designs by Ronalds Florist (*Argus*, 4 March 1954, p. 11, State Library of Victoria)

Right Lily Ronalds (right) advising a student at Emily McPherson College (*Melbourne Punch*, 1899, p. 374, State Library of Victoria)

Beverley Ronalds is recording the long gardening tradition of the Ronalds family in Britain, the United States and Australia. Her paper on the nursery established by Nathaniel's great-grandfather, Hugh Ronalds, near London is in the Garden Trust's *Garden History*. She is Nathaniel's great-great-niece.



Author image by Tony Bowers.

For the bookshelf

Ian Hoskins (2019) *Rivers – The Lifeblood of Australia*

National Library of Australia (NLA) Publishing, Canberra, 318 pp., \$49.99

Available from: <https://publishing.nla.gov.au/book/rivers-the-lifeblood-of-australia.do>

This book prompted a realisation that I'd long been curious about water, after reviewing Hundloe and Crawford's prescient *The Value of Water in a Drying Climate* (CSIRO, 2012). I recently read Peter Andrews's convincing *Back from the Brink* (ABC Books, 2014) on blocking up, slowing our rivers. And, slowly, Mary White's magisterial *Running Down – Water in a Changing Land* (Kangaroo Press, 2000). I had somehow bought *The Atlas of Water – Mapping the World's Most Critical Resource* (Clark & King, 2006, Earthscan).

The world's great cultures were and remain centred along rivers – a list of greats is fun to start: the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, Amazon, Mekong, Yangtze, Mississippi, Ganges, Danube, Rhine, Thames ...

Australia is earth's driest inhabited continent, yet being settler cultures who migrated from wetter places, we seem hard-wired to squander water. We dam, pump, mine under, irrigate and use rivers as if there were no chance of running out. We will run out: coming conflicts on water will define us. The 2012 Murray–Darling Basin Plan is one example. I expect wars in the future: rivers are so vital.

Dr Ian Hoskins could be well known to members – his histories of NSW's coasts (2013) and Sydney Harbour (2009), branch talks and walks around Balls Head and Waverton (on the Parramatta/

Lane Cove River). Ian will be a speaker at AGHS's 2020 Sydney conference.

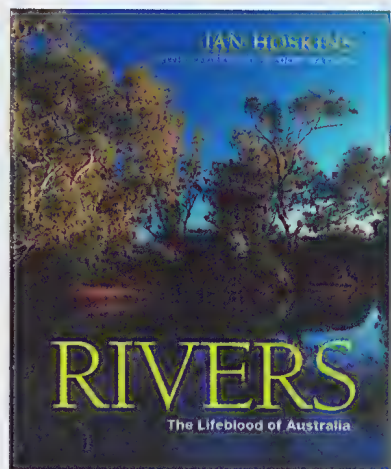
This book looks at our rivers as lifeblood, a thing we should do more. It offers a chapter each on ten as 'types': Clarence (transitional); Murray (contested); Yarra (urban); Channel Country (rivers of history); Ord (dreams of northern water); Molonglo (river that became a lake – Burley Griffin); Snowy (conflicted legend); East and South Alligator (Aboriginal waterways); and Franklin (wilderness).

It is smoothly and engagingly written, richly illustrated, referenced and indexed – all aspects so useful for further and repeated reference. Hoskins traces our relationships (or lack of them) to rivers. He notes how, for Aboriginal people, they can be ancestral beings, or places where ancestors lived, and knowledge is passed down, even with the later forced removal to missions. Sustaining places. And how waves of later settler people's attitudes to, and relationships with, rivers have evolved over time. From strictly mechanistic, focused on extracting water for crops or households, to the organic and more wholistic – Gaian, after James Lovelock's writing in the 1970s.

The chapter on the East and South Alligator Rivers of Gagadju/Kakadu is fascinating, exploring rivers as creation and sustenance for a people, a culture, despite regular intrusions. The chapter on the Franklin is equally so, noting how photography through visionaries such as Peter Dombrovskis and Olegas Truchanas opened urban voting eyes to the 'wild' unseen, or scarcely imagined, wet places – enough that a federal government would override a state one bent on delivering hydro power and jobs, but deaf to other issues.

The year 2019 was our driest recorded to date and tranches of Australia remain in drought. An apt *Sydney Morning Herald* article, dated 27 January, was 'Murray–Darling: Canberra threatens takeover of rivers'. My conclusion from this and the other books noted is we need to repeal s.100 of the Constitution, forbidding federal regulation of states' control of rivers. National overview and careful integrated management of entire catchments is vital to our survival, let alone fish, stock, bush, farms or gardens. We'd do well to press 'pause' on the Snowy Mark 2 project and rethink its folly. Yes, we need engineers involved. Plus ecologists, Aboriginal Elders, hydrologists – a range of expert views. Many voices – not just one: a loud, rich, over-influential sector demanding its 'share'. This is recommended reading!

Stuart Read is landscape architect, bureaucrat and educator who grew up in New Zealand thinking all rivers 'rushed' and 1200 mm annual rainfall was normal. Imagine his shock moving to Canberra in February 1990: parchment brown after technicolour green. Stuart is interested in water.



Roderick Floud (2019) *An Economic History of the English Garden*

Allen Lane/Penguin, London, 288 pp., \$A55

Here is a book whose title would deter anyone from perusing it, let alone buying it. Such a dull subject, economics, such a dry prospect for a work about history, and especially gardens, whose histories are fascinating, magnificent and multifarious.

First impressions are, fortunately, incorrect. Roderick Floud has delivered to gardeners, and those interested in the topic, a remarkable and fresh perspective on gardens, one that covers entirely new ground: the costs and financial rewards of gardening. Not only is the book innovative in its approach, it is, more importantly, deeply researched and well written in an engaging and accessible style. The author is a knight of the realm, a renowned economist and a highly respected academic.

By taking the approach he does, Floud is able to examine gardens in a completely new light: the costs of making a garden, especially the great gardens of the past; the costs of gardeners and their wages over the centuries; the costs and charges applied by landscapers and garden designers (no wonder 'Capability' Brown died a very wealthy man); the value and costs of the technical developments that have benefited gardens; and the costs of garden productivity, especially the economics of the kitchen garden.



Nathaniel Dance (later Sir Nathaniel Holland, Bt), 1748–1827, *Capability Brown*, oil on canvas, c. 1773, National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 6049)

What Floud reveals is most interesting. Well, it was to me. He uses old Royal household accounts and those of the great ducal estates to show that huge sums were spent by kings and queens and other titled personages to increase their prestige and the power of their courts, the objective being to impress the common herd, as well as foreign powers. He quotes some truly staggering sums: for one tulip tree, twenty-five feet high, George August Frederick, Prince of Wales and the future King George IV, paid £21 in 1734 – today's equivalent would be £38,120. On Clive of India's return to England he brought with him a fortune of some £40,000 (today's value £70 million), mostly gained from his share of the spoils of war. He was twenty-eight years old! After his second tour of duty on the sub-continent, he returned worth £400,000 (£668 million), of which he paid Capability Brown and a builder some £41,700 (£50 million) to build a house and landscape on his Claremont estate. Most of it went on Brown's bills.

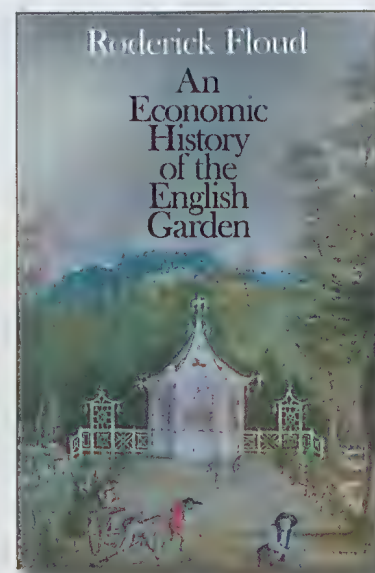
The expensive hobby is recorded through four centuries, at the level of patrons, customers, nurserymen and workers. It is utterly fascinating.

If readers spend \$11 buying a six-pack of seedlings, they should feel totally thrifty alongside the costs of gardening in the past.

Highly recommended.

A postscript from Trevor: Since I wrote my review, another has been published in the UK by a horticulturalist, and in his review he criticises the author's conversion rates from Georgian pounds sterling to Euros. However, I still stand by my rating of 'highly recommended'.

Trevor Nottle has been a member of the SA branch of AGHS since it began and is a well-known writer and journalist on a wide range of horticultural subjects, including garden history. A particular interest is the Mediterranean nature of the SA climate and the impacts of climate change on our gardens and plant choices.



Dialogue: a glimpse at bushfire recovery



The Beech Forest, Alan Wigginton (Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0)

Binna Burra Lodge, Border Ranges, Queensland

The eco-tourism resort, Binna Burra Mountain Lodge, founded in 1933 by the conservationists Arthur Groom and Romeo Lahey, suffered significant damage in September 2019 when bushfires swept through the Lamington National Park. The lodge's heritage-listed cabins, made of tallow-wood slabs and stringybark shingles hewn from the local timber, were totally destroyed.

In March, almost \$1.8 million in joint funding from the Australian and Queensland governments was allocated to support Binna Burra's clean-up and recovery. Binna Burra Lodge chairman Steve Noakes issued a statement saying he was determined to both preserve the lodge's heritage and history and consider the impacts of climate change on the surrounding forests. Professor Roger Kitching, a rainforest ecologist with expertise in the biology, conservation and management of invertebrate biodiversity, is advising on the Binna Burra recovery plan.

Binna Burra is a local Aboriginal (Yugambeh) word meaning 'where the beech trees grow'.

The lodge was named for the Antarctic beech, *Nothofagus moorei*, which is today little different from the flowering plants that flourished 100 million years ago, when this World Heritage Area was part of Gondwanaland. The Lamington National Park also protects one of Australia's largest remaining forests of hoop pine, *Araucaria cunninghamii*, among the world's oldest conifers. In May 2020, the fireproof safe containing valuable Binna Burra records was retrieved and, thankfully, about three-quarters of its contents have survived.

The Binna Burra Cultural Landscape was added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 31 December 2002 as a place important to Queensland's natural and cultural history, as well as for its aesthetic significance and its long and strong association with Romeo Lahey, who was significant not only in establishing Binna Burra but in having Lamington National Park gazetted in 1915. Given the vital importance of preserving the area, Binna Burra has also been added to the AGHS's Landscape at Risk register.

The Adelaide Hills, South Australia

The Adelaide Hills have long been susceptible to bushfires and were again hit during the 2019–20 Black Summer. Over 1000 hectares of vineyards were damaged, and the Charleston and Porter Scrub conservation parks were completely burnt out in the pre-Christmas Cudlee Creek bushfire. The Mt Lofty Botanic Garden was spared. That was not the case in two earlier fires, both of which occurred on Ash Wednesday. The 1983 fire, described as a ‘merciless inferno’ in a 2006 history, devastated more than half the garden, severely damaging much of its upper reaches (including the Rhododendron and Viburnum gullies). A South Australian Government grant of \$750,000 assisted in the reconstruction, which prioritised fire retardant plantings, creating firebreaks and upgrading water storage.

According to Robert Hatcher, Horticultural Supervisor at the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, the take-home message from these devastating fires is that no plants are fully fire retardant. In last summer’s fire even agapanthus burned. It is possible, though, to be conscious of wind direction and aspect when planting and to implement strategies to divert and channel fire. Southern slopes are better protected, and gravel mulch is not prone to burning.

The irrigation installed after the 1983 fire has served the garden well, as has the planting of deciduous trees (including *Acer*, *Quercus*, *Platanus*, *Betula*, *Liquidambar*), which has made the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden a very popular place to visit in autumn (until COVID-19 hit). Many of the maples are more fire retardant than eucalypts, although liquidambars and birch trees are not.

Rain in the Charleston and Porter Scrub conservation parks has encouraged re-sprouting. Among the first to revive were the yacca or grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.). Other quick responders are stringybark trees and pink gums. These fire-adapted plants store epicormic buds deep within the trunk or at the base of the plant. Their growth is normally suppressed by hormones from active shoots higher up the tree, but when they experience trauma, such as fire, the buds are activated. As early as February 2020, the regeneration of Christmas bush and guinea flower, native grasses, sedges and golden wattle had attracted back insects and birds – grey fantails, scarlet robins, fairy wrens, grey shrike thrushes, buff-rumped thornbills and tree creepers.



Mt Lofty Botanic Garden, Duck Pond, paperyork (Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Campbell Rhododendron Gardens, Blue Mountains

The Campbell Rhododendron Gardens were created in 1970 on 18.5 hectares of bushland in the Blue Mountains and are considered unique because no other garden has attempted to plant exotics underneath existing native bush on such a large scale. On 21 December 2019 the Grose Valley fire entered the Gardens. The fire burned out all the Australian native bushland, including the Hanging Swamp, and destroyed the rhododendrons in several areas of the Gardens. The other two-thirds of the garden, full of exotics, was untouched, although it did suffer badly because of the drought.

Following the fires, offers of assistance were received from as far afield as California. Since the fires, Gardens' volunteers have undertaken the mammoth task of clearing up. A professional tree removalist cut down about 100 burned and dangerous trees, many of which have been used to provide habitat for wildlife and for erosion prevention. Until it becomes clear over the next year which native plants will regenerate on their own, no planting will take place in the indigenous area. Replanting of rhododendrons began on 4 May, after a delivery of some 300 shrubs of varying sizes, from Toolangi Nursery in Victoria.

A Pathway leading into mixed native bush and introduced plants, Campbell Rhododendron Gardens, Blackheath NSW, October 2018, photo Bernadette Hince

B Rhododendron in flower, Campbell Rhododendrons Gardens, October 2018, photo Bernadette Hince

C A new rhododendron goes into the ground (courtesy Campbell Rhododendron Gardens)

D Students from Boston with volunteer supervisor David Sutton (in blue shirt) (courtesy Campbell Rhododendron Gardens)



A message from AGHS co-chairs Stuart Read and Bronwyn Blake

We hope this issue finds you safe and well. Thank you for your phone calls, emails and letters of support as we forge a safe path for the society together through these strange times. Many of you have commented on how special it has been to see people seeking and finding solace and peace in their gardens, parks and landscapes. COVID-19 certainly seems to have had the unexpected effect of people rediscovering the joy and satisfaction of gardening, appreciating gardens and getting back in touch with the earth.

In our discussions on how and when life will return to 'normal' and what post COVID-19 'normal' might look like, it will be important for the society to harness this rekindled appreciation of our green spaces as we advocate for their ongoing care and maintenance in our regions. We hope some of the questions asked in response to self-isolation have a longer life, such as 'why aren't parks and public gardens better funded and maintained?', 'why is Council chopping down street trees?', 'how are we using our precious water resources?' and 'how do we better prepare for bushfires?'

As planning for our annual conference in Sydney continues, we take this opportunity to thank the organising committee for their ongoing work and enthusiasm, against considerable odds. Members may not realise how much work goes into preparing for conferences and tours behind the scenes. It's hard enough in 'normal' circumstances! We are so grateful to all involved in this vital work and appreciate that keeping motivation going despite 'interruptions' has been hard at times. We hope you are patient if questions cannot yet be answered – the situation is very fluid at present.



Bronwyn Blake and Stuart Read, photo Penny Williams



Signs at the entrance of Morton National Park, Bundanoon, NSW, photo Peter Rodgers

The 'Landscapes at Risk' register was updated in April 2020. The criteria for 'at risk' are as follows:

- active current threat (development approved/lack of heritage listing or consideration of landscape heritage, lack of protection during development)
- potential future threat (development, neglect, poor management)
- lack of champions (community protest, unaware, council/manager uninterested).

You are invited to read through the list on the AGHS website (under advocacy) and recommend places you think should be there. Please email your suggestions and comments to:

info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au



MANY DREAMS // ONE LANDSCAPE

41st Annual AGHS National Conference



Joseph Lycett, 1774–1828, *Sydney from the North Shore*, 1827, watercolour (courtesy State Library of NSW)

SYDNEY Friday 23–Sunday 25 October 2020 plus optional day

MAIN CONFERENCE

Friday 23–Sunday 25 October 2020

OPTIONAL DAYS

Thursday 22 October 2020; Monday 26 October 2020

PRE- AND POST-CONFERENCE BLUE MOUNTAINS TOURS

led by Stuart Read

Monday 19 – Wednesday 21 October

Tuesday 27–Thursday 29 October 2020

At the time of writing, this year's national conference will be taking place at Luna Park, Milsons Point. Today Sydney Harbour and its landform and waterways form the city's dramatic backdrop. In 1795, an Eora gathering performed the kangaroo and dog dance, an initiation ceremony at Wogganmagully (Farm Cove). Gadigal, Cameragal, Burramattagal and Bijigal leaders attended. Associated with the Sydney region, these groups have been connected to Country for over 60,000 years.

Grace Karskens opens the conference with a retelling of the powerful forces that shaped the region's ancient natural environment. Other speakers include Michael Ingre and Paul Irish, the Macarthur–Stanham family, Paul Ashton, Wendy Whiteley and Janet Hawley, Janine Kitson, Colleen Morris, Roslyn Burge, Bronwyn Blake and Stuart Read. The day and a half of lectures will be followed by a day and a half of garden visits.

Pre- and post-conference tours

There are two identical three-day/two-night tours (Monday 19–Wednesday 21 October and Tuesday 27–Thursday 29 October 2020), led by Stuart Read, to historic gardens, villages and landscapes in the Blue Mountains.

Booking details

Online bookings can be made via the AGHS website:
<https://www.gardeninghistorysociety.org.au>

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria



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AUSTRALIAN
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Australian Garden History welcomes contributions of normally no more than 1500 words. Prospective contributors are strongly advised to contact the editor before submitting text or images.

The views expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Australian Garden History Society.

Getting to know them

stories from the AGHS national oral history collection

Message from the AGHS National Oral History Collection convenor, Patsy Vizents

Judging by the first half of 2020, this will be a memorable year. Not only is it the 40th anniversary of the AGHS, but the devastating fires in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and, now, the social isolation due to COVID-19 have altered our horizons on a physical and psychological level. We are all adjusting to these changes in one way or another and I'm sure we are finding solace in the respective 'silent spaces' of our gardens. For many, it is a time to plan and develop activities for when we will again be able to enjoy the company of others without a tape measure. One such activity is oral history.

Oral histories are a direct way of recording memories of people, events and places. They transcend geographic distance and time, shaped by the sound of a speaker's voice, their language style or, indeed, a dog bark or phone ringing when the recording is taking place. All these elements contribute to meaning, as understood by the listener.

In an article she wrote in 2011, Roslyn Burge described the richness an oral history can offer:

The transcripts are marvellous – but it's the rhythm of the voice that I have the luxury of hearing as I read all these transcripts. It's a reminder that the benefit of this extended project lies in the ability to read the transcripts and hear the vocal emphasis augmenting attitudes and recollections.

Much can be gleaned from a chuckle or a silence, a wry aside or a hesitation. This underlines the value of having available the recording and the transcript, as well as the very useful synopses that accompany them. A selection of the oral histories conducted for the national collection can be found on our website.

The energies of people like Peter Watts, Colleen Morris and Roslyn Burge over the last twenty years have ensured that oral history has assumed an important place in the society's activities, resulting in a rich primary resource for garden historians. The notion of cultural landscapes has gained increasing prominence in discussions about our surroundings. This opens opportunities for cross-disciplinary investigations into



the place of gardens, large and small, in our lives, thus making the AGHS's oral histories a resource not only for its members but also for landscape architects, anthropologists and social historians and, of course, plant lovers.

I hope all branches will be able to build on this foundation and are considering those in their midst who have a story to tell, one that contributes to the history of a branch or of AGHS management or other garden matters. Capturing stories of recent events is as compelling a reason to conduct an interview as any, and possibly there are stories of cultural landscapes impacted by the recent bushfires that should be recorded before memories fade.

We are all oral historians, capable of listening and recording stories. I encourage branches to work with the recently completed 'National Oral History Collection Manual' for advice on preparing and recording interviews.

I would like to thank all my predecessors, as well as those on the National Oral History Committee who are currently working with me, for their dedicated efforts in building both the national collection and undertaking oral histories in branches across the country. The oral history collection documents not only the lives, interests and gardens of those interviewed; it also traces the history of the AGHS, showing the work its members have devoted to keeping the society active and engaged with contemporary challenges. Like gardens, history is a changeable creature. The society now has a wealth of recollections to shed different lights on the organisation, its members and the gardens that have inspired it.



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.